

**Illinois Early Learning Council  
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee**

December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
10:00am - 12:00pm  
Ounce of Prevention Fund  
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400  
Chicago, IL

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Participants**

*In-Person:* Anna Colaner, Andrea Messing-Mathie, Lesley Schwartz, Bob Spatz, Elliot Regenstein, Teri Talan, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Maria Kontoudakis, Joellyn Whitehead, Carie Bires, Carmen Garcia, Noriko Magari, Jonathan Doster, Bernard Cesarone, Dawn Thomas, Erni Pun, Andi Irawan

*Phone:* David Alexander, Peter Mulhall, Pam Bonsu, Eric Lichtenberger, Cindy Zumwalt

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the August 14, 2014 meeting were formally approved.

**3. Updates**

**a. LDS/UECDS**

Anna Colaner provided an update. The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Annual Performance Review (APR) from last year is now posted. It is available on the Department of Education’s website. Work is underway for this year’s APR and it should be done within a few months.

Excelerate is currently accepting applications for the program. The Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) is making sure Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) programs submit information by the end of December. The Head Start pilot is in progress and data is being collected. The pilot will be included in this year’s numbers. Quality rating standards are being reviewed. Family child care standards should be posted soon as well.

There are three evaluation projects underway:

1. Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) validation study. Contracts are being negotiated for QRIS validation study and should be finalized soon. As a result, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute should be able to start work shortly.
2. The Innovation Zone initiative is going well and data is being collected.
3. Lead. Learn. Excel. (formerly Preschool Instructional Excellence Project) is guided by the Ounce. The University of Illinois, Bill Teale’s group, is evaluating the project.

Andrea Messing-Mathie provided an update. Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies was selected as the Centralized Demographic Dataset Administrator for the Longitudinal Data System (LDS). The Center is working on aligning systems to ensure things are ready to move forward as soon as agencies are ready. All agencies have signed off on the early learning child matching project. Hopefully an additional update will be available by January.

Anna Colaner provided an update regarding a new contract with ISBE and IBM. ISBE has contracted with IBM to do some work to ISBE's data systems. Rate to the Top-Early Learning funds are being allocated to fund this project. It was recognized that data system work related to early childhood data –internal to ISBE—is necessary to progress towards building the larger Illinois LDS.

**b. REL Midwest Project**

Pam Bonsu provided an update. American Institutes for Research (AIR) is working to analyze the status of six states' linkages between data systems. AIR is also seeking to explore the lessons learned by the participating states. Results should be reported and transcribed by January.

Since the last the last DRE meeting, AIR has scheduled and conducted interviews with: Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. Texas and Massachusetts are still pending. AIR has considered interviewing Ohio, which has done work with Maryland on early childhood data systems. There is interest on how the partnership formed between the two states and where Ohio and Maryland are in the process.

States that have been interviewed are in various phases of linking data. State advisory committees are playing larger roles for some states. If a state has an office of early childhood, that generally maintains the momentum for data systems. States that did not have an office of early childhood have since created offices through legislation.

AIR looked for states that were using LDS as a way to capture early childhood data and to answer key policy questions. In some instances, the LDS couldn't answer the questions that were of real interest to stakeholders. Therefore states decided to create systems. Some states are looking at LDS to inform, but the information available was insufficient.

**c. Federal Longitudinal Data Systems Legislation**

Elliot Regenstein thanked members of the committee that signed a letter urging Congress to include early learning in the federal bill that authorizes LDS grants. The act was previously known as the Education Sciences Reform Act but has been renamed Strengthening Education Through Research Act (SETRA). An LDS bill had passed the House but did not include early learning language. The Senate, while in committee, did consider an updated version including early learning. Report language was included to note that The Department of Education would give priority to states that wanted to connect early childhood data to LDS systems. The legislation has been delayed. There is bipartisan support. However, some legislators do not want to move the bill during lame duck session. It is unclear if SETRA will pass before the new Congress is sworn in.

**d. ISBE “use cases”**

Elliot Regenstein provided an update. Information has been forwarded to the ISBE work group, which focused on data privacy and security. A report was generated and will be forwarded to the committee members. Nicki Bazer is the General Counsel and led the work.

In creating “use cases”, the work group discovered there were different types of privacy concerns. A matrix was created to organize various types of data requests, such as individually identifiable data, de-identified data, or aggregate data. Then a user was identified, such as a researcher, organization, community early childhood partner, and a for profit vendor. Through this assessment, major concerns were raised in relation to third-party vendors.

This framework shall guide legislation for the spring. Currently, a bill regarding researchers will be presented first. There is speculation that additional users may be added to a later version. The work group identified legislation from other states and organized a matrix. It will be used as reference, if needed in the future.

Bob Spatz provided an update regarding an ISBE related issue. At the Illinois Association of School Board Conference in November, District 96 put forward two resolutions that passed. The first related to data equity between unit districts. The second related to longitudinal data systems between local school districts and local agencies to appropriately create and maintain a LDS. Bob will forward information so that it can be circulated to the DRE committee.

**e. Data policy peer exchange**

Jonathan Doster, Lesley Schwartz, and Andrea Messing-Mathie provided an update. In September, Illinois was invited to an early learning challenge technical assistance peer learning opportunity with Oregon, Georgia and New Jersey. Various stakeholders represented Illinois at the meeting in Kansas City, Missouri (DRE, OECD, CPS, ISBE, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and Northern Illinois University). The purpose of the meeting was to assess how policy questions are defined and secondly, review the data linkages that may answer those policy questions. The idea of using the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) alignment tool was presented. The tool helps align data dictionaries which connect data from different state agencies to answer policy questions. As a result of the peer learning opportunity convening, the CEDS tool will be used in Illinois in an attempt to answer a policy question. The Illinois stakeholders will work together in an attempt to align data dictionaries. The project is still in its infancy. The pilot question that is being used to test the tool is: how many kids are served in home visiting programs in Illinois?

In Illinois, there are over 300 home visiting programs across the state. There are four funders and six different data systems. Therefore, getting an unduplicated count is difficult. Finding data elements that can be reported across the state in unison is also a challenge. After the pilot question is tested, the CEDS tool may be used in other capacities.

Overall, the process gauged Illinois' LDS. The project is further exploring what other tools could be used. Currently, differences are prevalent across definitions. For example, race and age are two indicators that are defined in multiple ways across systems – thus, creating standard data dictionary definitions is vital. The project is only defining data dictionaries, not aligning data.

All four funders of home visiting have agreed to work on this project (ISBE, the Department of Human Services, Head Start and Early Head Start). The project will encompass all unique situations. Oak Park locally funds home visiting and this situation will be considered in the pilot.

**f. Braiding/Blending work group**

Teri Talan provided an update. Co-chairs from the committees of the Early Learning Council have formed an ad hoc work group. The work group was created to generate actionable recommendations regarding the report "Braiding, Blending and Substantive Funding Round Table". The Systems Integration and Alignment committee created the report. The newly created work group has not met.

**g. ISLE**

Anna Colanar provided an update on IL Shared Learning Environment Project K-12 project. At the previous DRE committee meeting, it was reported that ISBE would identify 7-10 school districts for possible early learning projects. Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge funds were allocated for the potential projects. Several delays occurred at the K-12 level. The project is behind schedule and concerns have surfaced over future funding. Therefore it was determined that pursuing an early childhood project is not possible as it may be too costly. There are additional discussions regarding the reallocation of funds that were originally set aside for this component.

**4. State Agency Data Advocacy**

Elliot Regenstein provided an update. Illinois' capacity to manage the data produced by state agencies and the ability to generate reports with that data has become a serious concern. At the previous DRE committee meeting, attendees agreed to draft a resolution.

Elliot Regenstein noted that a lot has happened since this issue was originally mentioned, with a gubernatorial transition and new agency leadership in Illinois. As the state leadership is shifting, it is necessary to stress the importance of state agency data for the new gubernatorial agenda.

A motion was made to forward the resolution to the executive committee of the Early Learning Council (ELC), which was adopted unanimously.

**5. Research Agenda Follow-up**

Elliot Regenstein led a discussion of the DRE's research agenda. The agenda incorporates questions that are important to policy and research. The questions on the research agenda would guide the ongoing design of data systems. Additionally, the questions serve as a resource to research communities. An initial draft was created by the DRE committee and shared to committees and subcommittees of the ELC.

The document presented at the meeting integrates comments contributed from nearly all of committees and subcommittees of the ELC.

Some of the comments included:

- The special education subcommittee felt that special education issues were left off the document. After discussion, it was agreed that the introduction section of the document will be expanded to clarify the research agenda encompasses all children, including those in early intervention and special education.
- No area was originally included for health, which largely affects home visiting. The section, “Social Determinants of Health” was created as a result. The DRE committee agreed that more feedback is needed from other committees, outside of home visiting, to ensure that the questions encompass broader health areas. The group also established that health and education are often related. Health, in turn, affects issues such program attendance. Therefore the new sections to the areas of inquiry were accepted to the research agenda.

A disclaimer will be added to the introduction section so that the public understands that research may have already been done in the specified areas of inquiry. However, the questions in the research agenda are important and must remain on the document. Further, it will be noted that the document is living and will be updated occasionally. The term “publically funded programs” shall be removed from the introduction as all areas of early childhood education must be reviewed. When completed, the research agenda will be posted the Early Learning Council and the DRE committee’s website.

As other subcommittees create research agendas, the DRE’s agenda can be the “catch all”. Appendices will be added to house other committee’s research agendas if necessary. The DRE’s agenda will vary in levels of specificity as some committees do not have a separate research agenda.

Members of the DRE committee are asked to send comments and feedback to Jonathan and Carmen by December 19<sup>th</sup>.

With regard to next steps, an updated draft will be circulated to the DRE committee. The subsequent draft will incorporate the suggestions and additions from the remaining committees, along with edits. At the next DRE meeting, the research agenda will be reviewed and prioritizations will be made. After this process, the research agenda will be presented to the full ELC, with the understanding that document is living, therefore periodic revisions will be necessary.

## **6. Wrap-up/Additional Items**

Bernard Cesarone of Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map project is retiring on Dec 31<sup>st</sup> and he will continue to do some work with the organization. Dr. Andi Irawan will be replacing Bernard and he started on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Action items:**

- **Report generated as a result of the ISBE “use cases” was created and will be circulated to the group.**
- **DRE committee members are to send feedback to DRE staffers by December 19<sup>th</sup> regarding the draft version of the research agenda.**
- **DRE staffer will send an updated version of the research agenda, after receiving feedback. Committee members will review it and at the following DRE meeting, members will work to create prioritization under each topic area.**